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ABSTRACT

Noting that the role of fathers in caring for children has received increased research attention over the last 20 years, this literature review concerns the role of fathers in the physical and psychological maintenance of children. The review is organized around three themes in the father care literature: (1) descriptions of care activities and variations linked to family and child characteristics; (2) father status in family arrangements; and (3) diversity in father care experiences. The review notes that, given the rise in dual-earner families, the availability of affordable and quality childcare, and increased expectations of fathers, an overall increase in father care activity is evident in this body of research. Yet, fathers are likely to assume secondary positions in the care of children, and this care tends to be less instrumental--primarily focusing on play and recreation. Family arrangements, in general, determine the level of and opportunity for fathers' care, and gender roles continue to circumscribe men's potential for increased involvement in care. The review concludes by identifying the limitations of current research and by examining plausible policy and practice directions. (Contains 169 references.) (Author/KB)

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A Review of the Literature

LR-CP-96-01
January 1996
(Second Printing)

by

James Earl Davis
The University of Delaware
and
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Commissioned by the

National Center on
Fathers and Families

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Abstract

Research on Fathers' Care concerns the role of fathers in the physical and psychological maintenance of children. This review is organized around three themes in the father care literature: descriptions of care activities and variations linked to family and child characteristics; father status in family arrangements; and diversity in father care experiences. Given the rise in dual-earner families, the availability of affordable and quality childcare, and increased expectations of fathers, an overall increase in father care activity is evident in this body of research. Yet, fathers are likely to assume secondary positions in the care of children and this care tends to be less instrumental — primarily focusing on play and recreation. Family arrangements, in general, determine the level of and opportunity for fathers' care, and gender roles continue to circumscribe men's potential for increased involvement in care. The review concludes by identifying the limitations of current research and by examining plausible policy and practice directions.

The National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF) is a policy research center that is practice-focused and practice-derived. Based at the University of Pennsylvania, NCOFF's mission is to improve the life chances of children and the efficacy of families by facilitating the effective involvement of fathers in caring for, supporting, and advocating on behalf of their children. Efforts are organized around three interdependent approaches: program development, a policy research and policymakers engagement component, and dissemination activities. NCOFF's research plan is developed around seven "Core Learnings," distilled from the experiences of programs and agencies serving fathers, mothers, and children around the country.

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Fathers' Care: A Review of the Literature

by James Earl Davis
and
William Eric Perkins

Research on fathers' care examines the role of fathers in the physical and psychological maintenance of children and the relationships that develop between fathers and their children throughout the life-course. Over the past 20 years, the role of fathers in caring for children has received increased attention in the research literature. The confluence of several factors--e.g., growth in the number of two-earner families, the women's movement, and the availability of affordable and quality childcare—have resulted in shifts in the expectations of fathers and questions about the nature of fatherhood and fathering, particularly the development of attachment and provision of nurturance (Benokraitis, 1985; Lamb, 1995).

Much of the literature on fathers' caring continues to be shaped by developmental psychology, sociology, and family and gender studies. It explores father participation without much attention to the process(es) through which men come to participate in their children's lives and the nature of this participation (Barnett and Baruch 1987; Palkovitz, 1984). While mothers still provide more childcare than fathers (Blair and Lichter, 1991), fathers' participation in childcare activities has increased significantly within recent years (Coltrane, 1996; Douthitt, 1988; Glennon, 1995; Levine and Pitt, 1996; Pleck, 1987). However, because father involvement in childcare is not a traditional arrangement, families in which fathers are responsible for a substantial amount of childcare may be considered "nontraditional" or "alternative." These families are typically middle-class, well-educated, and White (Pruett, 1987).

Most of the research on fathers' care continues to focus on highly-educated, middle-class, White, intact families. The experiences of fathers in the working class, among the working poor, and the underclass are ignored. In addition, single fathers and other unmarried or nonresident fathers are scarcely found in the literature, nor are fathers from different racial and ethnic groups. Thus, the current research literature represents an unfinished portrait of fathers' caring.

In research studies from the 1970s to the present, issues around fathers' caring have referred to a range of father-related activities in the daily care of children, families, and households. Most studies on fathers' care focus on activities traditionally associated with caregiving: feeding, dressing, changing diapers, bathing, reading, playing, and helping with school work (Starrels, 1994; Demo, 1992; Marsiglio, 1991). The care of children is described as a gendered activity in which caregiving expectations of mothers and fathers vary substantially. Most of the research includes a substantial discussion about fathers' financial participation and contributions to the material well-being of their children, thus placing other traditional forms of caring (e.g. feeding and bathing) in subordinate roles (Meyer and Garasky, 1993).

Organizing this literature review presented several challenges, attributable in part to the newness of the field and scarcity

of research on fathers' care, and to the disproportionate focus of the literature on fathers' financial contribution as an indicator of caring. Aspects of fathers' financial contributions are not considered in this review on traditional forms of caring. We begin by examining the literature on father care activities and describe some of the variations in care that are linked to family and child characteristics. This research also includes studies centering on factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of fathers being involved in the care of their children.

An important core of research seeks to understand how men conceptualize fatherhood, how their ideals translate into fathering behavior that demonstrates caring, and whether and how father care transforms men and affects the lives of their children (Bozett, 1985; Pleck, Lamb, Levine, 1986; Nute, 1987). All of these studies of fathers' caring and involvement can be broadly classified into three types: (1) descriptive accounts of father involvement, (2) comparisons of fathers' caregiving in various family arrangements, and (3) research aimed at assessing variations in attitudes toward and levels of care and participation.

Second, we focus on fathers' status in families with attention given to four predominate father-child arrangements: (1) married or cohabiting fathers in the same household with their children, (2) separated or divorced fathers living apart from their children, (3) single fathers who are primary childcare providers, and (4) young unwed fathers, including adolescents who usually do not live with the mother and child(ren). Lastly, we report findings on the diversity of fathers' experiences as caregivers by presenting the scarce research on African American, Puerto Rican, and gay fathers. The review concludes with a commentary on critical issues and problems in interpreting the literature on fathers' care and other recommendations regarding future research and policy studies in this area.

FATHERS' CARE ACTIVITIES

Child Care and Support during Children's Early Development

Despite recent increases in fathers' involvement in the care of children, there is still little known about what fathers actually do and about variations and antecedents to fathers' care (Pleck, 1987; Douthitt, 1988; Marsiglio, 1995). Care not only includes physical attention such as feeding and bathing but also encompasses other child interactions such as reading and playing. Most research suggests that fathers' participation in the care of their children changes as children develop from infancy to adolescence, with men providing very little care compared to mothers during a child's infancy (Bozett, 1985; Katsh, 1981; Marsiglio, 1991; Radin and Goldsmith, 1985). Fathers tend to be most active with their school-age children and are especially engaged in activities that revolve around play (Lamb, 1996; Hewlett, 1992; Salt, 1991). Fathers spend less time engaged in feeding and related caregiving than mothers (Cordell, Parke, and Swain, 1980; Harris and Morgan, 1991). However, it does not necessarily follow that lower levels of participation in early caregiving activities are absolute indicators of fathers' competence in childcare. To the contrary, fathers are often equally able to interpret a child's behavior and respond appropriately to needs (Jones, 1985; Shuster, 1994). While they are potentially capable of providing child care, fathers actually use their skills less often.

Several studies examine infant and preschool childcare (Baruch and Barnett, 1981; Cordell, Parke and Swain, 1980; Feldman, Nash, and Aschenbrenner, 1983; Jones, 1985; Katsh, 1981; Lamb, 1975; Lamb, Frodi, Hwang, and Frodi, 1982;

Manion, 1977; McKee, 1982; Perucci, Potter and Rhoads, 1978; Radin, 1982; and Salt, 1991). Conversely, the literature on father-child relations with adolescents is sparse due primarily to research focus on fathers' involvement with infants and toddlers (Demo, 1992; Rothbaum, Rosen, Pott and Beatty, 1995). Yogman (1982) offers a major contribution to the literature on father-infant relationships by using early video technology to study exchanges of expressive communication that underlie the developing relationship between a father and child. This study of six newborn infants at Boston Children's Hospital involved videotaped interactions of these infants with mothers, fathers, and strangers. Each session consisted of seven minutes of recording: two-minute periods of play followed by 30 seconds of the infant alone. The infants demonstrated a series of striking behaviors with mothers and fathers. For example, infants differentiated between their mothers and fathers and maintained longer periods of time with their fathers compared to mothers. In summarizing the conclusions from this particular study, Yogman points out that increased male parental investment may represent a physiological adaptation of men, and he calls for additional research into areas like male hormonal changes during the prenatal period.

In a critical review of the literature on father-child relationships, Lamb and Goldberg (1982) conclude that very little observational research had been conducted on the father-child relationship. They note that there have been very few studies of father-infant interactions in the home setting and that observations of father-infant interaction in the home is crucial in identifying successful and unsuccessful parental behaviors among fathers. The review also highlights assumptions fathers hold about traditional paternal roles that serve to socialize children, especially boys, into gender roles and identities. The author concludes that there are not biologically-determined sex differences in the potential for parenting behavior, but some biological predispositions are probably present. However, given the potential for the diversity of parental roles and the use of technology, the socialization of boys and girls are not dependent upon these differences.

Manion's (1977) research provides data collected from forty-five married couples who had been admitted to maternity in a private hospital in a small midwestern city. The data were drawn from two questionnaires administered to both mother and father, one prior to the birth of the child and the second six weeks later. Most of the men had very little experience with childcare in general or caring for infants. The majority of fathers actively participated in the delivery of their children. Responses to the questionnaire showed that six weeks after birth, all of the fathers participated in one or more of the following activities: rocking and walking, feeding, diapering, and bathing. Manion also found that the complexity of a childcare task affected the father's feeling of competence such that basic tasks like bathing or diapering were done infrequently. In addition, fathers who reported that their own parents had been nurturing had high infant care participation scores. This study confirms what other studies have suggested: past parental relationships shape current parental behaviors and choices (Cowan and Cowan, 1987; Lamb and Goldberg, 1982). Radin (1982) found that mothers who perceived their fathers as having had less involvement in childcare than other fathers of that generation have husbands who are heavily involved.

In a study of 169 first-time parents in a large northeastern city, Katsh (1981) found that fathers engaged in minimal caregiving, particularly in the first three months following birth. Katsh used a typical series of

indices of routine tasks like feeding, diapering, bathing, and attending the child at night to show that mothers dominate infant care. In another study of fathers' views on infancy and fatherhood (Cordell, Parke, and Sawin, 1980) a majority of the twenty-six fathers of three month-old infants had been involved in childbirth education classes. Among the most significant findings were that all of the men thought they should be involved in routine infant care, 44 percent thought they should be more affectionate with their children, and 88 percent thought there was some difference between men and women in relation to infant care. Over one-half of the sample mentioned that recognizing their children's emotional needs was a critical function of fatherhood. Future research on the effects of childcare classes on men's conceptions of fatherhood and the emotional bonds of parent and child is warranted, particularly regarding fathers from working-class and varied ethnic backgrounds.

Father-infant attachment is also a critical issue in early childcare. Jones (1985) focused on the attachment of fathers to one-year-old infants. The major finding was that men are sensitive to the needs of infants, but traditional sex role expectations and work schedules limit opportunities for fathers to develop nurturant behaviors. Jones recommends that future research include studying the effects of teaching fathers about newborn infants; expanding the sample base to include fathers who are not White, well-educated, and middle class; and, most importantly, developing "a coherent family meta-theory" drawn from a wide range of disciplines and approaches. He also argues for a combination of research studies that are both descriptive and experimental to capture the diversity of fathering practices, including geographical and ethnic variations and other differences between groups. More recent studies also reinforce the importance of father-infant attachment (Amato, 1994; Ferketich and Mercer, 1995).

In one of the early comparative studies of fathers' interaction with their four-year-old sons, Radin (1972) studied 21 lower-income and 21 middle-income White fathers to determine if there is a relationship between nurturance and the child's intellectual development. Radin concluded that "the masculine sex role definition in a lower-class culture may preclude sedentary, intellectual activities" with few men or "role models of men displaying a preference for such activities (359)." An effect of this absence of intellectual models is that "young boys who enjoy these endeavors may find themselves associating largely with females; the boys' sex-role preference at 4 years of age may therefore be primarily feminine" (359). Radin's finding that low-income fathers were less likely to be involved in intellectual activities with their sons relative to middle-class fathers probably reveals more about how low-income environments structure opportunities and experiences than about gendered relationships in those families.

Cross-national studies have shown that American fathers fare well when compared to fathers in other countries. Day and Mackey (1989) compared American fathers to fathers from 22 other countries with regard to the physical association between father and child. They found that American fathers' association with children is "rather typical." However, they note that fathers in the United States do relatively well if judged according to an egalitarian model of shared childcare. Almost one-half of the American children were the sole responsibility of women, compared with under one-fifth of American men. These data confirm what other studies have shown — that the domestic revolution is far from complete (Lamb, 1987; Morgan, Lyet and Condran, 1988; Seltzer, 1991).

In summary, research on fathering identifies numerous factors that affect roles

associated with fathers' care (Coverman, 1985; Berger, 1979; Bigner and Jacobsen, 1989; Day and Mackey, 1989; Feldman, Nash, and Aschenbrenner, 1983; Gerson, 1993; Greenberger, Goldberg, Hamill, O'Neill, and Payne, 1989; Marsiglio, 1991; Radin and Harold-Goldsmith, 1989; Pleck, 1979; Scanzoni, 1979; and West and Konnor, 1976). Generally, fathers are more involved in care if children are older (Barnett and Baruch, 1987), when there are fewer children in the household, and if they are biological offspring (Harris and Morgan, 1991). Similarly, fathers with higher levels of education engage in childcare more readily and more often and spend more time with children in education-related activities such as reading and home work (Marsiglio, 1991). Further, most research reports that fathers are more involved with sons than daughters (Fish, New and Cleave, 1992; Starrels, 1994). However, Russell (1983) found no such differences in fathers' engagement patterns.

Work and Fathers' Care

Several studies have focused on the relationship between the demands of work and the engagement of fathers in childcare. In one of the early studies, Levine (1977) focused on the Scandinavian model, calling for the United States to emulate family programs that exist in Norway and Sweden. At the time of the study, Norway's government was supporting an experimental policy of work-sharing in which both parents worked no less than 16 hours a week and no more than 28 hours a week. Although the household suffered a decline in income, parents were universal in their support of the program because it allowed them the opportunity to share parenting. In the late 1970s, Sweden instituted a program of paid parental insurance where each parent was allowed a seven-month leave to care for his or her children.

This study, though conducted some time ago, convincingly illustrates that there is a significant relationship between father involvement in early childcare and reduced work time. There is room for much additional research in this area, especially as the American economy undergoes restructuring and as new questions emerge: will there be room for job-sharing in the future, and how do employers perceive some forms of paid parental leave? These questions are implied in a study by Lamb, Frodi, Hwang, and Frodi (1982) that found that paid paternal and maternal leave permits the couples to divide parental responsibilities according to their personal preferences rather than simply based on social role expectations and pressures.

Pleck's (1979) study of men's family work provides a broad-based synthesis of three perspectives on men's family work: (1)traditional, (2) exploitative, and (3) changing roles perspectives. Within the "traditional" perspective, role differentiation is the norm. Men do little family work since their role is that of "breadwinner." The other factor in this perspective makes use of exchange theory, namely that men are exchanging their "breadwinning" role for their wives' domestic labor and childcare. The third factor within this area is "resource theory" which is based on the allocation of resources, such as time; for example, when a wife has less of a resource, like time, then the husband becomes proportionately more engaged in family work. The "exploitation" perspective has been shaped by feminist theory which argues that the inequality women face in the performance of housework is yet another manifestation of their exploitation by men. The "changing roles" perspective is concerned with the historical and evolutionary development of men's and women's family roles and as such is a product of gender inequality in both home and workplace.

Whether a man is employed may also

determine his willingness to provide care. However, data suggest that men -- employed and unemployed — think of childrearing as a gendered activity, as "women's work" (Gadsden and Hall, 1995). Radin and Harold-Goldsmith (1989) studied how employed and unemployed men related to their children. The authors focused on 48 White working- and lower-middle-class intact families with a child in preschool. Seventeen of the fathers were unemployed. Through telephone and personal interviews, the authors found a high level of support for Coverman's hypothesis that ideology and a father's perception of his ability to adequately respond to the demands of a child are predictive of the amount of his participation in childrearing. Additionally, broader social factors such as gender role expectations influence the out-of-work fathers' sharing of the childcare responsibilities. While other research suggests that fathers who are not employed do not necessarily spend more time with children (Marsiglio, 1991), particularly in play activities, jobless fathers were more involved than fathers who were employed. In this study, Marsiglio (1991) adds to the overwhelming evidence that traditional sex roles continue to dominate the attitudes of men and their willingness to provide care.

In a study of 79 fathers of girls aged 48 to 60 months from the greater Boston area, Baruch and Barnett (1981) found a negative relationship between independent fathers' participation and girls' stereotyping of both parents and peers. They also note that there was no effect of mothers' employment on how girls stereotyped their parents' roles and behaviors. This study provides some evidence that children's perception of fathers' caregiving behaviors is a far more significant influence on sex role stereotyping than mothers' employment (Carlson, 1984).

How much fathers participate in childcare often reflects how much they participate in general household responsibilities. Coverman (1985) identifies obstacles to husbands' participation in domestic work. This study is framed around three hypotheses: (1) the wealthier a husband, the less domestic labor he performs; (2) the more traditional the husband's sex role ideology, the less domestic labor he performs; and (3) the more domestic task demands on a husband, the greater his participation. The data used in this study come from the Quality of Employment Survey and are restricted to the responses of 698 White, married men who provided information on employment-related variables, including education, income, occupation, number of children, and work hours. The number of non-White respondents was negligible. Based on analysis of the data, Coverman reached the following conclusions:

> Findings from this analysis overwhelmingly support the demand/response capability hypothesis as the best explanation of domestic labor time. Number of children, number of hours spent in market work, and spouses' employment status are, along with age, the strongest predictors of husbands' domestic labor time. Contrary to the ideology hypothesis, an egalitarian sex role ideology does not increase men's domestic hours. In fact, it decreases the domestic labor time of married men. Importantly, findings with both absolute and relative measures of husbands' and wives' resources do not support the relative resource hypothesis. These results imply that neither attitude change nor socio-economic status will alter the domestic division of labor. Rather, they suggest that younger men who have children, employed spouses, and jobs that do not require long work hours are most likely to be involved in housework and child care activities (94).

This study is consistent with others that

have focused on men's participation in domestic labor and childcare activities: the greatest change in the division of household work responsibilities and attitudes (conditioned by the realities of women's participation in the workforce) has occurred among young couples (Greenberger, O'Neil, and Nagel, 1994). Related studies (Coltrane, 1990; Starrels, 1994;) also suggest that men at least begin to increase their family work when their wives are employed.

Gerson (1994) provides a journalistic survey on the impact of the gender revolution on traditional male roles. Using impressionistic accounts and narratives, Gerson describes several of the dilemmas facing fathers: (1) the conflict between being a good parent and providing economic support, (2) the tension between contrasting demands of nurturing a family and nurturing a career, and (3) the sacrifice of personal goals and freedom. Gerson also provides impressionistic evidence for what numerous studies have confirmed — that men are avoiding housework while increasing their participation in childcare. It appears, however, that although men are continuing to take advantage of job flexibility, they are seldom using it to participate actively in caregiving (Marsiglio, 1991; Barrett and Baruch, 1987).

Focusing on work and family, Greenberger, Goldberg, Hamill, O'Neil, and Payne (1989) examine a range of informal and formal social support networks and programs within work environments that support parents. The sample consisted of 80 married men, 169 married women, and 72 single women, all of whom were employed. Eighty-nine percent of the participants were White, 6.3 percent Hispanic, and 4.9 percent "other." The study participants reported using only a small number of the formal benefits available. Overall, subgroup differences did not emerge with respect to informal support mechanisms. The little variation existed among men in their use of informal and formal social support networks, but larger differences occur between men and women. Women, both single and married, are more likely to use formal family-related benefits to assist them in management of family responsibilities. This finding is consistent with traditional expectations that fathers' roles do not include their shouldering the burden of family and childcare responsibilities.

In general, fathers' involvement in childcare and other aspects of parenting has suffered from narrow conceptions of manhood and more specially, fathers' care (Hawkins, Christiansen, Sargent and Hill, 1993). A developmental perspective offers a method to examine the stages that men go through while looking at the evolution of parenting. The concept of "generativity" initially articulated by Erikson (1982) and defined as "an interest in establishing and guiding the next generation" was utilized in a study of fifty White men who were fathers of young children in intact, middle-class families (Bailey, 1992). Bailey concluded that fathers' generativity is not related to caregiving and that caring was better explained by mothers' employment. When mothers worked outside the home, fathers had a greater interest in establishing connections with their children. In sum, studies of this type stress the importance of generativity in the development of the fathers' parenting role; but only one of the critical barriers undermining generativity is empirically supported — fathers are forced into providing childcare by mothers' work situation. Such fathers must not only provide care but must also engage in traditional forms of housework.

In a older review of literature on men's changing family roles, Berger (1979) concentrates on institutional barriers that prevent men from realizing their full potential. For the benefit of therapists

working with men and families, Berger details the anxiety, fear, and frustrations that men may experience in the areas of physical intimacy, housework, and childrearing as role expectations for men in families change. The author argues that men espousing new family roles can benefit greatly from the support of their family and friends; however, this support is often lacking. More recent critiques of consequences of changing sex roles for men are still concerned with the precarious position of men as they negotiate source of difficulty -- inadequacy, self-blame, role ambivalence and contradiction -- encountered when adopting nontraditional roles (Belsky, 1993; Miller, 1991; Silverstein, 1996).

Members of the research and policy community have also grappled with the shifting meanings of fatherhood and more generally with postmodern notions of manhood and masculinity. Parallel to the ideas of changing role expectations for fathers in families discussed in this section, other studies examine the relationship between men's conceptions of manhood and their endorsement of related behavioral proscriptions (e.g., family involvement) and argue for more multidimensional and expansive constructs of manhood and gender role performance (Coltrane, 1996; Hunter and Davis, 1992; Silverstein, 1996). At the center of this work is a conceptual and paradigmatic shift that is also being reflected in lives of many men who are coming to terms with their multidimensional selves. When men can feel comfortable with a more broadly defined sex role, we may proclaim a small victory if it translates into substantive increases in fathers' participation in the care of children and household work.

FATHER STATUS IN FAMILIES

Modalities of father care and participation have dominated the literature on fathers and families (Arendell, 1995; Gerson, 1993; Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991). Research on fathers' participation has been organized primarily around father status in families: married or co-habitating, divorced or separated, and single fathers. We have included young unwed fathers as an additional status.

Married, Co-Habitating Fathers

Research suggests that in two-parent families women have been primarily responsible for care of all family members, including children (Chodorow, 1978; Cowan and Cowan, 1988). Although women increasingly are working outside the home (Spitze, 1988), they are still the predominate source of childcare (Tiedje and Darling-Fisher, 1993). This occurs, paradoxically, while societal expectations of men's responsibilities for care increases (Hochshild, 1989). However, Goldberg, Greenberger, Koch-Jones, O'Neil, and Hamill (1989) found that married fathers viewed employer-sponsored childcare and other childcare related benefits as important. Fathers in these two-parent households are almost always more heavily involved if they have a son (Starrels, 1994); that is, they are more nurturant, closer, and more supportive of sons than daughters (Cancican, 1989).

Morgan, Lyet, and Condran (1988) also found that fathers who lived with their children participated more actively in rearing sons than daughters. Other data sources (e.g., Hill and Holmbeck, 1987; Montemayor and Brownless, 1987) indicate that even fathers who co-parent or share childcare actually performed less work relative to mothers (Carlson, 1984). Positive effects of shared parenting by fathers have emerged, however. For instance, fathers who share caregiving were found to be more nurturant than fathers in families where the mother is the primary care provider (Carlson,

1984). Children in these families tend to hold less stereotypical concepts of parental roles (Starrels, 1994). For girls, living with a brother increases their chances of experiencing greater involvement with their fathers (Harris and Morgan, 1991).

In a study of antecedents of fathers' care, Feldman, Nash, and Aschenbrenner (1982) used a developmental perspective and interviewed 30 middle- and upper-middle income, White fathers-to-be. The authors distinguish between discrete, time-limited characteristics, such as the effect of the pregnancy experience on fathers, and more long-term characteristics, such as fathers' self-concept or quality of the marital relationship. Among their most important findings are that stable, long-term paternal characteristics were better predictors of father involvement. In particular, the quality of the marital relationship was the strongest predictor of satisfaction in the paternal role. While no relationship existed between amount of paternal caregiving and amount of play with the infant, low job satisfaction predicted high involvement in fathering. At least for this cohort, stable and happy marriages are a critical determinant of fathers' involvement in caregiving. However, questions about different forms of household organization, co-residence, and co-habitation examining whether factors similar to satisfied marital relationships make a difference are not addressed. Yogman (1983) also finds that men with more positive marriages are more involved in infant care.

Based on data from the National Survey of Families and Households, fathers' most frequent involvement with children centered around playing (Marsiglio, 1991). This is true for younger infants as well as older children. Only a very small percentage of fathers indicated that they did not play with their children. Other studies suggest that fathers are more likely to engage in play and recreational activities than in other forms of care (Lamb, 1987; LaRossa, 1988). Arguably, it is fathers' play that is responsible for increases in fathers' overall care of children (Beckett and Smith, 1981; Marsiglio, 1991; Starrels, 1994). Thus, although the research literature documents an increase, albeit small, in childcare participation by fathers who are present in families (Marsiglio, 1991; LaRossa, 1988), unfortunately, this involvement tends to be marginalized to play activities and only performed on weekends (Douthitt, 1988).

Divorced or Separated Fathers

In general, divorced fathers who do not reside with their children provide little in terms of childcare (Furstenberg, Morgan, and Allison, 1987; Furstenberg and Nord, 1985; Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991; Maccoby, Depner, and Mnookin, 1990). Parental involvement for these fathers is typically limited to play activities and entertainment, e.g., movies and sports events during visits. Moreover, the involvement of noncustodial fathers declines over time after the divorce (Seltzer, 1991; Furstenberg and Cherlin, 1991). Of particular concern is the limited fathers' involvement in children's homework and other school-related activities (Teachman, 1991).

One revealing study using a nationally representative sample of children from 11 to 16 years of age who had experienced divorce examined children' academic difficulty, problem behavior, and well-being to see if paternal involvement had any effect (Furstenberg, Morgan, and Allison, 1987). The authors suggest that the prevalence of paternal absence is surprising, given the widespread belief that children benefit from father involvement (Biller, 1976; Biller, 1993; Lamb, 1995; Grossman, Pollack and Golding, 1988). In view of such low levels of paternal contact with their children, they issued a call for "judicial and legislative

interventions" to promote a more active paternal involvement, not only for fathers' economic support but also for broader support and care. They note that it "is disconcerting to discover weak evidence for an almost commonplace assumption in popular and professional thinking — that children in disrupted families will do better when they maintain frequent contact with their fathers" (p. 700).

Shared or cooperative parenting (also known as co-parenting) after divorce is rare and research on fathers' care in this area is limited. Fathers' co-parenting would probably mirror that of single fathers when the child is in the father's home unless the father shares that household (Hipgrave, 1982; Risman, 1986). As expected, divorced co-parents are more likely to be middle and upper-class and highly educated (Emery, 1988). Fathers find this arrangement beneficial to children (Kimball, 1988) and tend to be more satisfied than mothers (Benjamin and Irving, 1990; Emery, 1988) with co-parenting.

Single Fathers With Custody of Children

The literature on single fathers is limited, despite a slow but steady growth in the number of households headed by single fathers. Men are both receiving custody of their children in divorce settlements and, in other cases, sharing custody of their children with former spouses. Meyer and Garasky (1993) provide an analysis of the myths surrounding single fathers and the policy implications of these myths. The evidence from which they draw shatters five myths: (1) there are few single fathers, (2) most single fathers have remarried, (3) many single fathers are widowed and few have been married, (4) custodial fathers are economically very well off, and (5) custodial fathers receive custody of older boys. They use data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), and the Wisconsin Court Record Database (WCRD). The former two allow for a national sample, while the latter provides data on support that is far superior to other surveys.

The findings address the rise in father-only, father-headed households, from fewer than 350,000 families in 1959 to 1.4 million in 1989. Father-headed families, while a small percentage of all families, have been growing the fastest of all family types. Second, the majority of custodial fathers (59%) remain unmarried. Third, between 1970 and 1990, the number of children living with never-married fathers increased dramatically from 32,000 to 488,000. Fourth, although father-only families have higher incomes than mother-only families, there is a significant number who live in poverty (18.2% of father-only families with children under 18 were poor). Fifth, while children living in father-only families tend to be older, some fathers do have custody of young children (17.5% of father-headed families include children under the age of three). Also, compared to married fathers with children, single fathers are more likely to be Black, younger than 30, and have less education than their peers. On the other hand, custodial fathers are more likely to be White, older, and more highly educated than custodial mothers. These findings illustrate the profound socioeconomic differences between the two groups of fathers, differences which should be considered seriously by those creating intervention programs and policies to address child support and custodial parenting concerns.

One of the first studies to take note of the emerging trend of single fathering was completed by Schlesinger and Todres (1976) whose work focused on fathers in a large Canadian city. As might be expected, they found that the break-up of the families was

emotionally traumatic for children. Findings from the study also suggest that most housework is shared by the father with older siblings. The father usually prepared the meals, counseled the children, and made most of the decisions. Most of the men in the study required some kind of financial assistance for the costs of housekeepers and daycare centers, and to maintain an adequate standard of living. Many of these men felt there was little or no government support for their role and many complained of the stigma that is attached to being a single father (Hipgrave, 1982; Nieto, 1982).

Much of the research on single and custodial fathers is conducted after divorce (Gersick, 1979; Grief, 1985; Hanson, 1986; Hipgrave, 1982; Katz, 1979; Meyer and Garasky, 1993; and Risman, 1986). Gersick (1979) studied 20 fathers who received custody of their minor children following divorce and another 20 fathers who functioned as the control group whose former wives had custody. The men resided in a large and socioeconomically diverse county in Massachusetts. Structured interviews were used to gather data on five broad variables: (1) demographic characteristics, (2) fathers' family of origin, (3) fathers' participation in child rearing, (4) father's sex-role orientation, and (5) characteristics of marital dissolution. The men had an average age of 38, were married for almost fourteen years, and had two or three children. Men in the custody sample were older and well established, contradicting the traditional view that men who were awarded custody would be younger. Within the combined sample, all of the men were active fathers. Surprisingly, none of the participation measures discriminated between custodial and non-custodial fathers. Gersick found that four variables were significant in determining if a father sought custody: (1) his relationship in his family of origin, (2) his feeling toward his former wife, (3) wife's intention about custody, and (4) the attitudes of the attorneys on both sides. The relationship between the father and his family of origin was found to be particularly important.

One of the critical issues is fathers' desire for custody (Meyer and Garasky, 1993). While Meyer and Garasky (1993) found that generally, fathers wanted custody, Hanson (1981) reported no significant differences between the children of fathers who sought custody and the children of those fathers who accepted custody yet would not have otherwise sought it. However, fathers who sought custody perceived a more positive relationship with their children than did the latter. In subsequent research, Hanson (1986) studied 74 father-child pairs and concluded that generally, single fathers in the study appear to be supportive and nurturing parents to their children.

Schlesinger (1978) provides a synthesis of the research on single fatherhood from Australia, Britain, Canada, and the U.S. Much of this study concerns concrete recommendations that will assist single fathers. For example, in Australia there was a call for more part-time work, longer hours at childcare centers, housekeeping services, increased tax deductions for single fathers, more public housing, and counseling services. In this early review for the U.S., Schlesinger cites one of the few studies done at the time on a diverse sample of single fathers from California; it included 15 African American, 14 White, 2 Chicano, and 1 Cninese American males. One consistent finding across these racial/ethnic groups was the ambivalence these men felt when they undertook their new roles without clear role prescriptions. The lack of role clarity contributed to stress associated with the need to coordinate employment and child care responsibilities.

Fathers often experience role strain and confusion resulting from adjustment to a

single parenting role -- particularly young fathers. Having primary responsibility for care and custody of children is often a daunting task for many who have been socialized to expect a secondary role in childrearing (Greif, 1985; Hanson, 1981; Heikes, 1994). Men generally feel inadequate and lack the confidence to negotiate the uneasy currents of single fathering (Orthner and Lewis, 1979; Nieto, 1982).

Hipgrave's (1982) survey of the literature on single fathers offers a broad analysis of the problems and issues facing single fathers. This review provides cultural, psychological, and social dimensions of lone fatherhood by examining the potential difficulties faced by single fathers — time limitations (either too much or too little time devoted to children and housework); stigmatization by the community for being a single father; or overwhelming feelings of isolation and loneliness. Findings of the review suggest that single fathers have difficulties maintaining friendships and sometimes suffer from confused feelings over sexual identity as when a single father shops for clothes with his young daughter. In a similar vein, Katz (1979) finds that single fathers suffer a multiplicity of problems, the most common being financial. However, like many researchers who study fathers, he recommends counseling service and other supportive and practical assistance following divorce.

Single fathers are often seen as "mothering." Risman (1987) surveyed 141 fathers' homemaking work. The sample was drawn from fathers who had responded to advertisements in Single Parent Magazine and from referrals from social service agencies in Washington State and Boston. Ninety percent of the fathers were White, about one-half had not graduated from college; about one-third were graduates; and the rest had advanced degrees. Risman found that four out of the five fathers had no help with homemaking. Over 80 percent responded that they "were personally responsible for the varied tasks of housekeeping: grocery shopping, food preparation, housecleaning, and yard work"(98). Fathers spent considerable time with their children in both "household chores and recreational activities."

The fathers in this study were also quite satisfied with their role as what we call "father-homemakers." One critical dimension in this study was the effects of social class: single fathers' economic status affects primarily instrumental tasks. Thus, fathers who could afford outside help for homemaking, expensive recreational activities, and the like, did so, but this was only a small fraction of the total sample. These data supporting the idea of capable and competent homemaker fathers have important implications for both policymaking and future research. Although men are not taught to be homemakers, in some cases they appear quite able to rise to the occasion and manage these tasks. Still, information on competence of single fatherhood is tentative and needs more depth and clarity.

The stress of transition to parenthood applies to single fathers with different incomes and professions. Bowen (1987) focuses on single fathers in the Air Force, a "closed" culture. Bowen studied 87 single fathers on bases in the United States, Europe, and Asia, and found that tension exists between the demands of on-call duty and raising children. Nearly three-quarters of the respondents reported that they had problems in four areas —(1) disciplining their children, (2) lack of adult support in parenting, (3) lack of time to meet all responsibilities, and (4) difficulty in balancing work and family demands. Child care was the most serious concern, and many of these fathers used friends, neighbors, or adult relatives to care for their children. Despite the availability of free or low-cost daycare on the bases, most single fathers preferred to make their own arrangements. Many of these fathers were

also unaware of support groups for single parents. Bowen observed that single fathers have been viewed as a problem by Air Force leaders and as a result, appropriate support mechanisms have not been put into place to assist these fathers.

The literature on custodial and single fatherhood offers a number of directions that future research might take — diversified samples, intensive examination of the cultures of parenting (particularly the role of fathers), and comparative studies.

YOUNG UNWED FATHERS

Only recently has research been directed toward young unwed fathers (Lerman and Ooms, 1993; Lerman, 1993; Joshi, 1990), and much of it focuses on program and policy interventions targeting teenage pregnancy and delinquency (Watson, 1992; Mincy, 1994). Not surprisingly, most research substantiates the belief that young fathers have very limited involvement with their children compared to other men (Parke, Powell, and Fisher, 1980), and thus, are least likely to provide financial child support and childcare (Achatz and MacAllum, 1994). The apparent lack of adequate employment is often cited as reason for this limited involvement (Danziger and Radin, 1990).

However, there is some evidence that these young men are not completely neglectful (Bolton, 1987) but have some meaningful involvement and attachment to their children (Wattenberg, 1995; Johnson, 1995). For the most part, this involvement tends to be limited to play and recreational activities and becomes more infrequent as the child grows older (Furstenberg and Harris, 1993; Sullivan, 1993). Actually, this decline of involvement may be related more to the young father's relationship with the child's mother than father-child relations (Lerman and Ooms, 1993). Young fathers at times forfeit seeing their children rather than connect with their mothers. Likewise these strained relationships may cause some mothers to prevent fathers from having access to their children. Four studies on young unwed fathers (Gerhenson, 1983; Marsiglio, 1988; Parke, Power, and Fisher, 1980; Simms and Smith, 1982) serve as example of research in this small, yet growing body of research.

First, Gerhenson (1983) studied 30 women who had children before they were 20. They were recruited from hospitals, schools, social service agencies, and by word of mouth. Two sessions of taped interviews for each respondent were conducted. One finding indicated that changing cultural norms in relation to teenage pregnancy affected the way these young women related to men as potential fathers. Less than one-third of the women lived with their husbands, the remainder having formed permanent or semi-permanent relationships with boyfriends, former husbands, and former boyfriends. The data on boyfriends are perhaps the most interesting, since their degree of involvement with the children was related to the mother's plans for the relationship. In what was perhaps an ominous conclusion for the future of the traditional family, Gerhenson (1983) concludes that the experience of these young mothers suggests that neither kinship nor household membership is necessary for a male to perform those psychological and instrumental functions commonly associated with fatherhood in our society. These family care arrangements are considered reflective of African American households that traditionally tend to be more fluid in their structure (Hunter, 1992).

Second, Marsiglio (1988) examines the co-habitating intentions of 325 high school males from a large midwestern city. At least 69 percent of the respondents indicated that they were "slightly likely" to live with their child and the mother; 18 percent indicated that they were extremely likely to do so. Whites

and Blacks were equally likely to say they would be "slightly likely" to live with the child and mother. Also, respondents' voiced concerns about restrictions on their dating other women and spending time with their friends were the most negatively rated items. Being required to have a job and watching their child grow were the two most positively rated items. Finally, 48 percent of these young males reported that they were "quite likely" to live with their child and partner if they were confronted with a unexpected pregnancy if they had been dating the same girl for a year. Marsiglio offers the following explanation for these seemingly contradictory findings:

> A number of factors might account for the inconsistency between the high school males' intentions and recent national patterns. Young Black mothers and their parents may be less likely than their White counterparts to endorse marriage or living together in an unplanned pregnancy, given the employment pattern of young Black males. In this study, Blacks were more inclined than Whites to indicate that their parents would have a negative attitude toward the idea that they should live with their child. Black males could therefore have intentions similar to White males but encounter more obstacles in trying to actualize their preferences (457).

Third, Simms and Smith (1982) investigated young married fathers' attitudes toward marriage and family. Five hundred and forty mothers under the age of 20 were interviewed and asked if researchers could interview the fathers of their children. Eventually, 83 percent of these men completed interviews. Most of these men were very young and of working-class origin, with low incomes and high unemployment. Most of them expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their marriages — surprisingly high given their adverse economic situations. The majority of men were also quite pleased with fatherhood. The authors conclude that the reasons for such high levels of satisfaction is that many of these men come from large families. As the authors note, "their parents married young and had a lot of children. So in getting married young themselves and having a child right away, they were behaving quite conventionally in relation to their own background" (150).

Fourth, Parke, Power, and Fisher (1980) examined the adolescent father-infant relationship. They note that, just as for older fathers, there are simply not enough observational studies of the adolescent infant-father relationship. They also note that both teenage mothers and fathers were unfamiliar with even the rudiments of child development and that teenage fathers substitute play for real caretaking. Young fathers, in fact, play with their children more than mothers. One of the major recommendations to emerge from this study is a call for a series of cultural support systems for adolescent fathers.

The collective data from these studies suggest that young males may be more involved in the early development and care of infants than previously thought (Bolton, 1987). Despite the mixed yet promising results of new work in the field overall, research on young fathers' care continues to lack sufficient depth and clarity to provide program and policy directions. In general, the literature on father status in families reveals that with the exception of single parents, fathers' participation in childcare is most constant among married men who share households with their children and least constant among young unwed fathers not residing with their children. There are significant variations in fathers' care attributable to family arrangement (Bowman and Ahrons, 1985; Blair and Lichter, 1991), but there appears to be compelling evidence

that personal decisions and gendered division of labor at home still continue to define fathers' caretaking roles (Gerson, 1993; Fineman, 1991; Levy-Schiff and Israelashvili, 1988).

DIVERSITY IN FATHER CARE EXPERIENCE

Most research on fathers' care has involved White middle- and upper-class men. While there is a growing body of research on non-White fathers, there is a paucity of studies on fathers from African American, Asian-American, Native American, Latino, and immigrant backgrounds. What makes this omission all the more disturbing is that these groups will compose the new demographic majority early in the next century (Farley and Allen, 1987). Studies that do include non-White fathers offer some interesting results and conclusions that should provide direction for future research (Roopnarine and Ahmeduzzaman, 1993; Ahmeduzzaman and Roopnarine, 1992; Cazenave, 1979; Connor, 1986; Isaacs and Leon, 1988; McAdoo, 1981; McAdoo, 1986; McAdoo, 1988; Wilson, Tolson, Hinton, and Kiernan, 1990).

Studies about African American fathers include Ahmeduzzaman and Roopnarine's (1992) investigation of African American fathers' involvement with pre-school children. Specifically, 45 African American men with a preschool-age child from lower- or middle-class families were recruited from preschool programs, community centers, and churches. Each father was asked to complete information about paternal involvement, family functioning, and support. The study was specifically concerned with factors that account for variations in father-child relations within ethnic groups and differences between these groups. From the data, the researchers offer a number of observations: there is a scarcity of literature on African American fathers compared to White American fathers; African American men are more likely to share housework and childcare than White American men; there is more egalitarianism among African American men in sharing household tasks with their wives when employment, income, and sex-role attitudes are controlled for; and the greater the economic security, the more involved African American men become with their children.

In addition, they found that African American fathers estimated that they spent 2.7 hours with their pre-school children compared to 6.7 hours for their wives. Since men tend to overestimate the time spent with their children, the authors asked the wives to estimate the time the fathers spent with their children — 7.6 hours for mothers to 2.8 for fathers. While these findings reject the notion of detached, inaccessible Black fathers, they find that caregiving is hardly egalitarian in these households. However, Black men appear accessible and involved with their children (McAdoo, 1986). Similarly, the idea of Black middle-class fathers being sex-role flexible and equally sharing in house work and childcare (Wilson, Tolson, Hinton, and Kiernan, 1990; Mirandé, 1988) is not completely supported. Rather, these findings support that differences in early caregiving are the result of gender-specific role expectations (Tronto, 1989; Cowan and Cowan, 1987; Perry-Jenkins and Folk, 1994). Additional work involving class and regional variations among African American fathers is warranted from these findings.

Price-Bonham and Skeen (1979) studied 160 Black and White fathers in Classic County, Georgia. The fathers in this study were interviewed by a male and female interviewer. Black fathers viewed themselves as less strict than White fathers, said they ignored their children, talked to them less often than White fathers, and felt it was essential that their children be like them. The authors' main focus is on parent education,

an area that has been minimally examined in the fathers' care literature. They conclude that Black fathers need role models and parent education that would emphasize variations of the instrumental role of parenting (Seltzer, 1991). Fathers should be involved in developing these programs which probably would be more easily facilitated with male group leaders. These findings are consistent with those of the Unwed Father Pilot Project in Philadelphia (Achatz and MacAllum, 1994; Perkins, 1994).

Cazenave's 1979 study of middle-income Black fathers expanded the literature on fathers by focusing on an exclusive sample of middle-class Black fathers. Using a small and homogeneous sample of 54 letter carriers from New Orleans with a mean age of 45, Cazenave asked for perceptions and responses to critical questions such as: "What does it mean to be a man today?" and "What does it mean to be a Black man today?" To the first question, 41 percent centered on one key word, "responsibility." For these men, manhood was defined by being responsible. To the second question, 44 percent of the men reported that things were better, that there was increased opportunity and more "race pride." Another finding consistent with White fathers (Harris and Morgan, 1991) was that even though these men expressed a greater preference for male children, they were also actively involved with their female children.

Cazenave's study was ground breaking when it first appeared, but it is now more than 15 years old, and our concept of fatherhood, along with the current stark realities of life in the inner city, has changed the social context and expectations for these men. Cazenave argues that more "general research" would have to be done on Black fathers from different backgrounds as well as both "descriptive and more specific verification research" on Black fathers. Likewise, more studies looking at working-class and low-income Black fathers are needed. But what makes this study so important is its cultural grounding in a very real, very specific Black community. The work of Cazenave and others (Bowman and Sanders, 1988; Smith and Midlarsky, 1985; Hunter and Davis, 1994; McAdoo, 1986) suggest that Black men generally and fathers specifically endorse the importance of their role in family responsibility and involvement within a specific cultural context.

Connor's (1986) study of the parenting attitudes among young Black fathers is based on a 2-page self-report questionnaire. The 136 fathers were drawn from a large Southern California urban area. The author utilized an ethnographic approach, observing and questioning respondents in "barber shops, churches, work sites, shopping centers, parks, department of public social service office waiting rooms, and 'on the street'" (161). Future research will have to go "to the real source" to uncover the kinds of Black fathers who can provide researchers with a richness of qualitative data that can make the quantitative data come alive.

Some of the most important results from this study were the following: about 42 percent felt that a woman's place was in the home; 21 percent thought she should be working; 37 percent indicated it was her choice; two-thirds shared the discipline of the children with their wives — using corporal punishment; over one-half of the men indicated they were the "boss" at home, while 38 percent indicated that role was shared; many men (82 percent) felt that education was the key to the "good life" for their children; most men reported that they were a positive influence on their mates (66 percent) and their children (74 percent); and they also felt that couples needed "to get along better" (66 percent). There are several problems with this study. Concerns about the validity of self-reporting should not completely detract from the richness of the responses from

ordinary Black fathers who offer testimony on their feelings and roles that may be confirmed by a wide range of social science literature. Connor's focus on the lives of "every-day" folk (Dinnuerm, 1992) and his ethnographic and social/cultural network approach should be seen as useful strategies in reaching fathers from African American and other ethnic groups.

Studies of differences in visitation rates for Black and White fathers is important for revealing the adaptive capacity of Black families and their alternative ways of defining roles (Isaacs and Leon, 1988). Their findings posit some variations in visiting rates: Black fathers visited their children less than White fathers. These finding contradict Seltzer (1991) who found that Black fathers had higher probabilities of visiting and participating in decisions about their children. However, other studies (e.g., Seltzer and Bianchi, 1988) maintain that Black fathers' involvement in care is lower relative to White fathers.

One consistent trend identified for all fathers is a decline in involvement with their children over time (Seltzer, 1991; Furstenberg, and Cherlin, 1991). Interestingly, Black fathers are slightly more involved with children after infancy (ages 5-18) (Marsiglio, 1991). Isaacs and Leon (1988) also find that the frequency of visitation significantly predicts mother's self-reliance, extended family support, and father's residential proximity. These findings are important because they demonstrate the role that serial kinship continues to play in African American families (Stack, 1974). African American familial obligations have been molded by a different set of historical and cultural factors (most notably, the legacy of slavery, peonage, and migration which forced Black families to expand their obligations among networks of "kin and friend"). This study contributes to our knowledge about specific cultural nuances of Black families in historical context.

Using a similar conceptual frame as Cazenave (1979), John McAdoo (1981) examined the experiences and child-relations of Black fathers. In this study of father-child interaction, the sample consisted of 40 Black fathers and their preschool children from the Baltimore-Washington area who resided in middle-class, intact families. The fathers were randomly selected from a pool of volunteers. The author used a modified version of the Radin Cognitive Home Environment Scale (CHES) with questions designed to elicit information on the father's perception of his role in socializing the child, including the father's role with schoolwork. Using a nonverbal rating scale, he found that Black fathers have positive and nurturing interaction with their children, noting that the "overwhelming verbal interaction type was nurturing" (122). Additionally, the interaction "was identified as warm and loving, supportive, and meeting implicit and explicit needs of children." There were also no differences in the way the fathers treated boys and girls. And though the fathers considered themselves strict, their parenting behavior was authoritative, not authoritarian. For instance, McAdoo summarized,

> we want to reiterate that these middle-income Black fathers exhibited the same range of attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs as did fathers from other ethnic groups in our American culture. They tended to be warm and loving toward their children. They tended to be more egalitarian in their decision-making regarding child-rearing practices than did other ethnic groups (129).

In a follow-up study of Black fathers' relationships with their preschool children, McAdoo (1986) looked at the development of the child's racial identity. McAdoo found that "a positive relationship existed between the

observed restrictiveness of Black fathers and their pre-school children's racial attitudes and racial preferences" (177). While this main conclusion is hardly earth-shattering, this research opens the door to begin systematically examining the role that Black fathers play in shaping their children's racial identity. There is a major gap in research in this area as well as their role in child outcomes.

In McAdoo's third study (McAdoo, 1988), the author revised the research literature on Black fathers' socialization of their children. He concludes,

> when economic sufficiency rises within Black families, an increase in the active participation of the Black father in the socialization of his children was observed. Their expectations for their child's behavior in the home also appears to be similar given socioeconomic status patterns....The implications of these findings appear to be that research should now move beyond the ethnocentric studies of the past that focus on the most problematic, economically devastated Black families, sometimes inappropriately comparing them to families of college professors, and study the various roles the Black father plays in the socialization of his children (234).

In these studies McAdoo explores the myths associated with Black fathers, namely the absence of any contributory role in childcare activities. In this study, however, McAdoo provides some evidence that Black fathers actively participate, not only in decisions about care but also in the provision of childcare. However, this study falls short of providing compelling evidence of egalitarian care of children in African American families.

Black fathers also are playing minimal roles in childcare compared to mothers. In a study of the childcare duties among Black families, Wilson, Tolson, Henton, and Kiernan (1990) documented the role of the extended family in providing care for children of working parents, both single and intact. Sixty-four families from central Virginia were identified through referrals made from an informal network of church groups and friends. Based on interviews with these fathers, they found that mothers have the most prominent role in childcare and socialization. Also, when other adults are present, the mother engages in fewer household tasks and childcare duties compared to when the mother is raising children alone. An intergenerational analysis concluded that grandmother's presence has more of an impact on the mother's childcare activity level than does the father's presence. In another observation of the role of the father, consistent with research on other fathers (Cox, Owen, Lewis, and Henderson, 1989), these researchers found that Black fathers serve as an adult resource in child development even when there is limited contact with children. This observation does not necessarily confirm the idea of adaptive capacities of African American fathers — that roles are more flexible and outside the norms of mainstream culture — but it does speak to the historical fluidity of Black households often based on economic necessity (Hunter, 1992).

Most of the research on African American fathers indicates that race is not a significant variable in fathers' care and involvement. Black fathers and White fathers appear to approach childcare in very similar ways (McAdoo, 1986; Beckett and Smith, 1981), participating in limited childcare activities, thus reserving the lion's share for mothers (Hossain and Roopnarine, 1993). There is some evidence from the literature that Black fathers, however, engage with their children differently. Marsiglio (1991) found that Black fathers were less likely to read to older

children, but more likely to play with them. This finding remained after controlling for level of educational attainment. There was no difference, however for engagement activities with children between the age of two and four.

Roopnarine and Ahmeduzzaman (1993) also examined Puerto Rican fathers' involvement with their preschool children. The authors were confronted by the scarcity of data on Puerto Rican fathers in developing their research and were equally concerned with the traditional stereotype of Puerto Rican men as aloof and obsessed with *machismo*. The authors chose 40 Puerto Rican men with preschool children who were asked to fill out the Parental Involvement in Child Care Index (PICCI), the Family Functioning Style Scale (FFS), and the Profile of Family Support Scale (PFS). The fathers spent an average of 2.7 hours in primary caregiving compared to their wives who spent 7.3 hours per week. One of the most important conclusions these authors advance is:

> The associations between men's functional styles and their involvement with their preschool-age children point to some key factors that may influence fathers' investment with young children in the Puerto Rican families we surveyed. More specifically, men's commitment to promoting the general well-being of the entire family [was] positively associated with involvement with children. For the most part, these associations suggest that a strong investment in the family by mainland Puerto Rican fathers may be an overriding factor influencing their investment in child care (105).

This is an insightful conclusion about Puerto Rican fathers and their children: they are committed to involvement and participation. But, in general, Puerto Rican fathers do not vary in their participation in childcare relative to Black and White fathers (Ahmeduzzaman and Roopnarine, 1992). Although the data show a higher level of father involvement with children than traditionally expected of these fathers, whether this commitment to participating in actual childcare activities is realized in an effective way is unknown. Fathers' actual time with children appears not to support this commitment. Research that addresses questions about the cultural process of getting fathers involved and maintaining involvement is important.

Research on gay fathers has examined the contradictions in these two seemingly conflicted roles (Miller, 1979). For the most part, however, being a gay parent presents no measurable limitations to providing care (Miller, 1987; Hays and Samuels, 1989). Moreover, there is no relationship between a father's sexual orientation and the ability to care for his children (Miller, 1987). Research estimates that there are 6 million gay husbands and fathers (Bozett, 1985; Schulenburg, 1985) in the United States who are involved in a variety of childcare arrangements.

Measuring the perception of the value and function of children, the responses of a group of gay fathers were compared to a group of heterosexual fathers. Bigner and Jacobsen (1989) studied the parenting behaviors of homosexual and heterosexual fathers in one of the few studies of its kind. Their first significant finding is that 20 to 25 percent of gay men are also fathers. The authors document the problems that gay fathers face, including the perception by the larger society that the gay father is a pariah, his outcast status in the homosexual subculture because he is a parent, and the negative stereotyping generally associated with gay men. They studied 66 men who were fathers of at least two children; 33 of these men were self-identified as gay.

The gay subsample came from a gay support group in Denver, Colorado. Gay fathers felt they had to be more proficient at parenting than straight fathers (perhaps because they wanted to disprove negative stereotypes or perhaps because of their own feelings of guilt) and were more "authoritative" in managing their households than were heterosexual men. The authors also found that,

> Gay fathers may be more androgynous than non-gay fathers in their parenting orientation. As such, they may incorporate a greater degree and combination of expressive role functions than the more additionally sex-role oriented non-gay fathers. These expressive role functions are seen more conventionally in the female, mothering role (184).

Gay fathers are very similar to non-gay fathers in their reasons for having children (Bigner and Jacobsen, 1989). Some differences did emerge, however. Gay fathers placed greater emphasis on fathering as a way of conveying social status and gaining acceptability as an adult, while non-gay fathers focused on traditional reasons for fathering: continuing the family name, securing support of children in old age, passing on family traditions. Studies of gay fathers also show little difference, if any, regarding relations and involvement with their children (Bozett, 1987; Harris and Turner, 1986; Wyers, 1987). Even when gay fathers "come out" to their children, the father-child relationship is usually not affected, with children responding positively (Bozett, 1988). Some researchers argue that children may be more tolerant and accepting of variations in human behavior and expression because of their interaction with a gay parent (Bigner and Bozett, 1990).

Why expressive or nurturing role behavior is more common among gay male parents than among their heterosexual counterparts is not completely understood (Bozett, 1989; Bigner and Jacobsen, 1989). This study should be replicated to determine what factors are at work in shaping this gay sensitivity to nontraditional sex roles, especially since gay men have been socialized in traditional male culture. Studies document the influence of fathers' — both gay and straight — instrumental and expressive roles on children's outcomes (Easterbrooks and Goldberg, 1984). Understanding expressive role behavior among these fathers would extend the literature on family arrangement influences on child outcomes.

As one can see, the scarcity of research on fathers from different backgrounds limits our understanding of fathers' care and involvement in a multicultural sense, and thus prevents us from developing a multidimensional conceptualization of fathering. Only when the research and data are expanded will our understanding of the diversity in fathers' care also expand.

CONCLUSION

A review of the literature on fathers' caring reveals that fathers, in general, are less involved in the care of children than mothers. Most fathers participate in some level of care. However, the nature and quality of this care varies greatly (Douthitt, 1989; Pleck, 1985). Further, fathers' demonstration of caring is often circumscribed by family and child arrangements and cultural and social expectations. This is not to say that fathers do not care for their children. In some cases, fathers are primarily responsible for childcare.

Most studies in the review focus on the quantitative indicators of care — the amount of time fathers spend with children and the number of activities involved. It is extremely important to examine the nature and quality of these activities. The literature on father

involvement, while not conceptually identical to childcare, is suggestive for our interest in fathers' care because the type of involvement and activities in which fathers are engaged with their children is important. The problem of distinguishing fathers' care from involvement itself is made abundantly clear in the research literature.

Likewise, factors associated with children and family arrangements also influence fathers' care and involvement. For instance, fathers are more involved with their biological children (Marsiglio, 1991), older children (Belsky, Gilstrap & Rovine, 1984; Russell, 1982) and sons (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984; Harris & Morgan, 1991; Marsiglio, 1991). Arguably, fathers who live with their children are generally more involved than fathers outside of the home. The literature also suggests that characteristics of mothers have an effect on the opportunity for fathers' care. Some mothers may assume a role of "gatekeeper" of the relationship involving fathers and children (Beckett and Smith, 1981; 1987; Hass, 1988) and may prefer providing exclusive care (Hochshild, 1989). Thus, opportunities for fathers' care may be limited. Also, strained and ambiguous relationships between the mother and father, particularly for adolescent fathers, minimize father care and involvement (Waterenberg, 1993). Fathers' care is not only important to children but also to fathers themselves. Stronger ties are developed between fathers and children during care activities (Palkovitz, 1984), but fathers' sense of competence and contribution to children's development as well and self-concept are enhanced (Baruch and Barnett, 1986; Radin and Goldsmith, 1985).

Three significant problems and limitations are evident in the father care literature. These limitations have particular consequences for those looking toward the literature for policy directions. First, research on fathers' care has largely been guided by quantitative conceptions of care — without much attention given to what constitutes quality care. Few studies in the literature are concerned with the processes and mechanisms of care. We cannot assume that activities documented in the literature — numerous descriptive and correlational studies of fathers' care — are the models of care that we desire. The activities uncovered in the review are not necessarily grounds for proscription and designs of fathers' care. It is possible, however, to conceptualize fathers' care in more novel, effective, and optimal ways.

Second, studies also are needed on the impact of different kinds of arrangements on children and on fathers who are "forced" primary caregivers. In addition, the clinical community needs to investigate how different groups have affected men's perceptions and definitions of sex roles and how clinicians from these different groups might utilize their understanding of these cultures to change men's attitudes. Studies need to offer concrete suggestions for policymakers on how to remedy the tension between work and home equitably.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, men traditionally have not received a foundation in either father education or parental socialization (Meyers, 1993; Levant and Doyle, 1983). Father education should become part of the middle school and high school curriculum. Developing a national fatherhood and parenting curriculum should be one of the major foci of new research and policy initiatives.

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